

REVENUE MUSEUM

By Brendon Colvert

DUBLIN CASTLE

Historic Dublin Castle attracts visitors from all over the world to view The State Apartments, St Patrick's Hall, the earliest fortifications, Chester Beatty Library, Chapel Royal, Garda (Police) Museum and many other areas of interest. A visitor to the Crypt of the Chapel Royal at Christmas 2007 might note that there was no evidence of a museum; but by the 7th March 2008 this area was transformed into an extraordinary display of artifacts and documents depicting the history of Revenue Collection in Ireland. This is an amazing achievement due to the work of a dedicated group that has produced an impressive display worthy of repeated visits.

Readers of IPA Journal should note the proximity of the Revenue Museum to the Garda Museum in the Records Tower, the oldest part of Dublin Castle; this is characteristic of the unity of purpose which has prevailed over centuries between Revenue and Police in Ireland; most notably in recent times by the establishment of the Criminal Assets Bureau. To access the Revenue Museum you may enter Dublin Castle at the Lower Castle Yard entrance and walk directly over to the Crypt which is at the base of Chapel Royal.



Photo by C Pringle - Revenue

Revenue Chairman Frank Daly with Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen T.D. who declared the official opening of the museum



Photo by C Pringle - Revenue

Revenue Chairman Frank Daly & Tánaiste Brian Cowen viewed through one of the exhibition displays



Photo by B. Colvert

Effigy of King Brian Boru over the museum entrance



Photo by B. Colvert

Image of St Patrick over museum entrance

The 12 noon opening ceremony was performed by Mr. Brian Cowen T.D., Tánaiste & Minister for Finance on the 7th March 2008. Prior to drawing the curtain on the plaque he addressed the assembly and lauded the committee for its spectacular achievements in such a short period of time. He emphasized the necessity of levying taxes to sustain civilizations saying that the history of tax collection 'goes back a long way.....we will ignore the whisperings of those who think it should have stayed there'. He further developed the point 'While the modern day defaulter should fear the sheriff.....his or her counterpart in Viking times were at risk of losing their noses'. My ears tuned in more acutely when I heard him quote a member of the Colbert family to outline in a humorous way the secrets of taxing the populace in the most effective way. He quoted Jean Baptist Colbert-1691 to 1683- who was hired by Cardinal Mazarin as *Côntroleur Général* (Minister of Finance) in the Court of Louis XIV in 1665; his dictum was 'the art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest amount of feathers with

the least amount of hissing. Is it any wonder that with the wisdom of the Colbert mind, the legal training of the Minister of Finance, the cleverness of the Police and the experience of the Revenue Commissioners that the CAB is so effective?

The Minister's speech was followed by an address given by Mr. Frank Daly, Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners. The talk outlined the establishment of the Museum and he complimented a long list of distinguished persons who made the dream a reality. He offered a very learned discourse on the long history of revenue collection in Ireland reverting back to St Patrick who was no slouch when it came to exacting tax from the Kings of Ireland to sustain the churches and schools that he had established. Apparently St Patrick's system of taxation was sustained in its original form for centuries. Mr. Daly also commented on the success of King Brian Boru who was High King in Ireland from 1005 until his death at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014. King Brian Ó Cinnéide, called Brian Bóraime (in English Brian Boru) is not a legend though his deeds were legendary; he unified the territory, defeated the invaders and with the tolls rebuilt churches, monasteries and libraries. His name, Boru, is derived from bó meaning cow and his wealth was due to exacting taxes by way of payment in cows, boars, & sheep. Mr. Frank Daly advised the audience that collecting cattle today as a means of taxation would be impractical and very awkward; he should know '*for he was one of the main drivers of Revenue's first venture into the world of electronic filing services*' according to Mr Brian Cowen.

Curiously the entrance to the Revenue Museum is under an arch embellished on either side by two stone carvings; these were inserted into the Crypt entrance under the Chapel Royal built between 1807 & 1814. To your left is the carven image of

Brian Boru and to the right that of St Patrick. How apt that these images should scrutinize revenue commissioners, visitors, historians, police and who knows maybe tax evaders as they enter the museum to see the memorabilia.

At the conclusion of Chairman Frank Daly's address we listened to poet Dennis O'Driscoll who had composed a poem for this great occasion.

AT THE REVENUE MUSEUM

*Sometimes at the end of day,
they come to mind; old friends
and colleagues; bosses who were
sticklers for detail; dexterous drafters
of subsections, pluggers of loopholes;
custodians of the frosted public hatches;
income tax staff inured to tonguelashes;
larger than life characters- long dead-
who live on in these museum rooms.*

*Officers whose squashed initials
left their marks on carbon copy letters
in archived files, who ruled these
marbled-papered day books now on show.
Staff who served, in braided uniforms
like these, at pre-single market, prefab
border stations or made landslide seizures
of contraband at airport exit channels.*

*And sometimes at the end of day,
a silence probes so deep
it proves an audit of official lives,
the years from shyly signing
entry papers in the Personnel Branch
to the long-service presentation by the
Board.*

*Years showcased here, impressed in wax,
crystallised in glass, enshrined in paper,
pewter, brass: the past saved for the future,
like a budget surplus; not excised from
the record, but salvaged like scorched ledgers
from a war-torched Custom House.*

Dennis O'Driscoll.



Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen T.D., Revenue Chairman Frank Daly and sculptor Orla De Bri with the sculpture she made for the Revenue Museum



Poet Dennis O'Driscoll reciting his specially crafted poem, at the Revenue Museum

To commemorate the official opening of the museum a sculpture was commissioned by sculptor Orla de Brí. The metal sphere is constructed from padlocks and presents an eternal puzzle as the keys are suspended inside the welded cage thus leaving it intact into perpetuity. The imagery is closely allied to revenue duties where for instance spirits mature, locked in warehouses, until duty has been paid. The artist, Orla de Brí was present and is pictured with Tánaiste Brian Cowen & Chairman Frank Daly.

After the formalities the guests were accorded a reception in the Board Room; tongues were loosened; spirits brightened and appetites assuaged. Public figures, officials, TV personalities, historians, poets, sculptors, editors, photographers & reporters



Photo by C Pringle - Revenue

Revenue Chairman Frank Daly with Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen T.D. viewing a replica of an early uniform. Note a motor-cycle helmet that will be familiar to some members of the IPA



Photo by Jim Herlihy

Orla de Bri's sculpture with revenue locks symbolizes the collecting and securing the revenues of the State; keys enable the Government to unlock the doors to education, health and other services. Those who evade the law face the ultimate sanction of ending up under lock and key

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*Maurice Walsh,
 born in Kerry
 1879 was a
 prolific author and
 at the same time
 was a Customs &
 Excise Officer
 serving both in
 Scotland and
 Ireland. He was
 the author of THE
 QUIET MAN
 which was
 subsequently
 filmed in the west
 of Ireland by John
 Ford in 1952.*”

mingled animatedly. Amongst the guests I met Donal Kivlehan of the Garda Museum; Glenn Thompsom Historian and Military Expert supreme who has been a staunch friend of IPA publications for many years; Jim McDonald CBE, LVO, KCSG, KCHS, JP,DL & Chairman of The RUC GC Foundation; also the non pareil Jim Herlihy, Historian, Author, Researcher, Consultant, Lecturer IPA member and a frequent contributor to IPA publications. I enjoyed pleasant exchanges with Paddy Ryan Chairman of the Museum Committee, Tony Fawl & John Medley who with others worked on the committee and who provided a warm welcome.

Jim Herlihy has an inexhaustible store of historical facts in his head. At the reception he recounted so many ways in which the Revenue Commissioners and the Police have been associated in the past; one of these is worthy of retelling to our readership. Maurice Walsh, born in Kerry 1879 was a prolific author and at the same time was a Customs & Excise Officer serving both in Scotland and Ireland. He was the author of THE QUIET MAN which was subsequently filmed in the west of Ireland by John Ford in 1952. The theme song for the film was the ISLE OF INISFREE; the lyrics and melody were composed by Dick Farrelly, born in Kells in 1916 and who joined An Garda Síochána in 1939. Dick Farrelly wrote over 200 songs but is probably best remembered for the 'Isle of Innisfree'. Thus we may deduce that collaboration between Revenue & Police proves to be a winning combination. LONG MAY IT LAST.

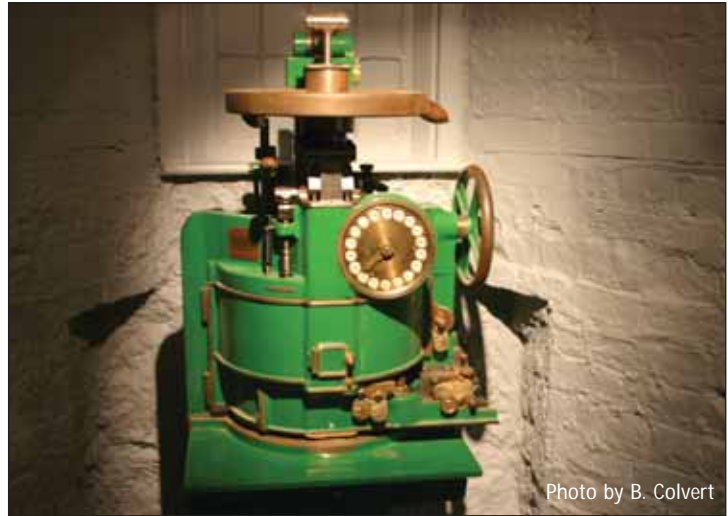


Photo by B. Colvert

An elaborate stamping machine used to impress an image on official documents



Photo by B. Colvert

View of the Crypt entrance, Chapel Royal and Garda Museum in Records Tower